



**DIG AND BE DUG
IN RETURN:
SELECTED POEMS OF
LANGSTON HUGHES**

EDITED BY RAYMOND SOULARD, JR.

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P O R T L A N D , O R E G O N



S C R I P T O R P R E S S

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Number Twenty-one

This volume is for Lisa Marie Zent

Burning Man Books is a special projects division imprint of
Scriptor Press
2442 NW Market Street, #68
Seattle, WA 98107
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www.geocities.com/scriptorpress

This volume was composed
in the Book Antiqua and BeesKnees fonts
in PageMaker 6.5 on the
Macintosh G4 computer

I DREAM A WORLD

I dream a world where man
No other man will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.
A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all mankind —
Of such I dream, my world!

DREAM DEFERRED

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore —
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over —
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

GODS

The ivory gods,
And the ebony gods,
And the gods of diamond and jade,
Sit silently on their temple shelves
While the people
Are afraid.
Yet the ivory gods,
And the ebony gods,
And the gods of diamond-jade,
Are only silly puppet gods
That the people themselves
Have made.

MADAM AND THE PHONE BILL

You say I O.K.ed
LONG DISTANCE?
O.K.ed it when?
My goodness, Central
That was then!

I'm mad and disgusted
With that Negro now.
I don't pay no REVERSED
CHARGES nohow.

You say, I will pay it —
Else you'll take out my phone?
You better let
My phone alone.

I didn't ask him
To telephone me.
Roscoe knows darn well
LONG DISTANCE
Ain't free.

If I ever catch him,
Lawd, have pity!
Calling me up
From Kansas City.

Just to say he loves me!
I knowed that was so.

Why didn't he tell me some'n
I don't know?

For instance, what can
Them other girls do
That Alberta K. Johnson
Can't do — and more, too?

What's that, Central?
You say you don't care
Nothing about my
Private affair?

Well, even less about your
PHONE BILL, does I care!

Un-humm-m! . . . Yes!
You say I gave my O.K.?
Well, that O.K. you may keep —

But I sure ain't gonna pay!

MADAM AND THE WRONG VISITOR

A man knocked three times.
I never seen him before.
He said, Are you Madam?
I said, What's the score?

He said, I reckon
You don't know my name,
But I've come to call
On you just the same.

I stepped back
Like he had a charm.
He said, I really
Don't mean no harm.

I'm just Old Death
And I thought I might
Pay you a visit
Before night.

He said, You're Johnson —
Madam Alberta K.?
I said, Yes — but Alberta
Ain't goin' with you today!

No sooner had I told him
Than I awoke.
The doctor said, Madam,
Your fever's broke —

Nurse, put her on a diet,
And buy her some chicken.
I said, Better buy two —
Cause I'm still here kickin'!

PERSONAL

In an envelope marked:
PERSONAL
God addressed me a letter.
In an envelope marked:
PERSONAL
I have given my answer.

PIERROT

I work all day,
Said Simple John,
Myself a house to buy.
I work all day,
Said Simple John,
But Pierrot wondered why.

For Pierrot loved the long white road,
And Pierrot loved the moon,
And Pierrot loved a star-filled sky,
And the breath of a rose in June.

I have one wife,
Said Simple John,
And, faith, I love her yet.
I have one wife,
Said Simple John,
But Pierrot left Pierrette.

For Pierrot saw a world of girls,
And Pierrot loved each one,
And Pierrot thought all maidens fair
As flowers in the sun.

Oh, I am good,
Said Simple John,
The Lord will take me in.
Yes, I am good,
Said Simple John,
But Pierrot's steeped in sin.

For Pierrot played on a slim guitar,
And Pierrot loved the moon,
And Pierrot ran down the long white road
With the burgher's wife one June.

PEACE

We passed their graves:
The dead men there,
Winners or losers,
Did not care.

In the dark
They could not see
Who had gained
The victory.

WEALTH

From Christ to Ghandi
Appears this truth—
St. Francis of Assisi
Proves it, too:
Goodness becomes grandeur
Surpassing might of kings.
Halos of kindness
Brighter shine
Than crowns of gold,
And brighter
Than rich diamonds
Sparkles
The simple dew
Of love.

SUICIDE'S NOTE

The calm,
Cool face of the river
Asked me for a kiss.

ENEMY

It would be nice
In any case,
To someday meet you
Face to face
Walking down
The road to hell...
As I come up
Feeling swell.

SICK ROOM

How quiet
It is in this sick room
Where on the bed
A silent woman lies between two lovers—
Life and Death,
And all three covered with a sheet of pain.

ACCEPTANCE

God in His infinite wisdom
Did not make me very wise—
So when my actions are stupid
They hardly take God by surprise.

MOTTO

I play it cool
and dig all jive
That's the reason
I stay alive.
My motto,
As I live and learn,
is:
Dig and Be Dug
In Return.